

# 2020 Census Delays, Apportionment, and Congressional Redistricting

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Every decade, the [apportionment](#) (or *reapportionment*) process determines the distribution of [U.S. House seats](#) across states. The [Constitution](#) requires a U.S. population count every 10 years ([the federal decennial census](#)) in order to distribute House seats based on each state's population. Once the census and apportionment are complete, states then engage in [redistricting](#) to create or redraw geographic subdivisions for each House district and for their own state legislatures.

Data delivery delays following the 2020 Census raised [some concerns](#) about [possible effects](#) on the ability of states to conduct redistricting ahead of the next election cycle. For example, the condensed timeline may have presented challenges for states to complete congressional redistricting by [constitutional or statutory redistricting deadlines](#), candidate filing deadlines, or primary election dates.

Each state with multiple congressional districts has completed its initial redistricting process and many states did so ahead of those related dates, although [not without difficulties](#) in at least some states. Enacting an initial redistricting plan, however, does not necessarily mean redistricting has entirely concluded until the next apportionment. As with every contemporary redistricting cycle, [legal challenges](#) to some maps [have been made](#), which can necessitate further congressional district changes.

## 2020 Census and Apportionment Delays

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic led to certain delays in 2020 census data collection and delivery. Multiple bills were introduced in Congress that would have adjusted [statutory deadlines](#) for the Census Bureau to deliver apportionment data to the President or [redistricting tabulations to states](#), but no statutory changes were enacted.

On March 18, 2020, the Census Bureau [temporarily suspended](#) 2020 field operations. On April 13, 2020, the Bureau [announced](#) field offices would close through June 1. Under its final [revised schedule](#), and following a [U.S. Supreme Court ruling](#), the Bureau accepted census responses [until October 15, 2020](#), two and a half months later than usual.

The Bureau [announced](#) on January 28, 2021, that apportionment counts would be available by April 30, 2021; those were [released](#) April 26, 2021. A second announcement on February 12, 2021, indicated states

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would receive redistricting data by [September 30, 2021](#). Redistricting data were released [August 12, 2021](#), in the “[legacy format](#)” the Bureau has used since 2000, along with [support materials](#) for users; a subsequent release of a different data format became available [September 16](#) at <https://data.census.gov/>.

## Apportionment and Seat Number Changes

The 2020 census apportionment resulted in House seat losses for seven states and gains for six states, distributed as shown in **Table 1**. The [U.S. apportionment population](#) increased by 7.1% since 2010, to [331,108,434 individuals](#), and the average congressional district size increased to [761,169 individuals](#). [Six states](#) are to have a single House seat and did not need to draw district boundaries.

**Table 1. Loss or Gain of U.S. House Seats in States Following 2020 Census**

Lost House Seats		Gained House Seats	
State	Seat Change	State	Seat Change
California	-1	Colorado	+1
Illinois	-1	Florida	+1
Michigan	-1	Montana	+1
New York	-1	North Carolina	+1
Ohio	-1	Oregon	+1
Pennsylvania	-1	Texas	+1
West Virginia	-1		

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, “Table D1. Number of Seats Gained and Lost in U.S. House of Representatives by State: 2020 Census,” *2020 Census Apportionment Results*, April 26, 2021, at <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/data/apportionment/apportionment-2020-tableD.xlsx>.

## Method and Timing for Congressional Redistricting

States vary in their redistricting processes, but congressional district boundaries are typically determined by a commission or state legislature, as shown in **Figure 1**. Of the 44 states with multiple House seats following this apportionment, 11 states gave redistricting commissions the authority to determine congressional districts, and 33 states gave this responsibility to their legislatures. Courts also could create district maps if a commission or legislature is unable to complete redistricting (depending on state law), or if legal challenges are made to a completed map.



Although all states with multiple House seats completed initial congressional district maps, legal challenges may result in further district changes. At the time of writing, legal challenges have been made to maps in [21 states](#), and court decisions affecting congressional maps have been made in [8 states](#).

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